The A. F. of L. Weekly News Service gives a brief summary of important matters affecting labor, occurring in the industrial, legislative and judicial fields, and such other information that will benefit the trade union movement.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE

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AGITATE ORGANIZE EDUCATE

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GREED BLOCKED BOULDER DAM; WANT TO CONTROL ELECTRICITY

Washington, April 23.—The electric power trust expends vast sums of money annually to poison the public mind, and the people pay for the poisoning, said Senator Norris at a testimonial dinner arranged in his honor by the National Popular Government League. Former Senator Robert L. Owen presided. He referred to Senator Norris as "the ablest and one of the most upright public servants in the United States." Among the 300 guests were many members of Congress and trade union officials.

In tracing the fight in the last Congress for the Boulder Canyon dam that would impound the waters of the Colorado River, Senator Norris drew a vivid picture of the danger to 65,000 inhabitants of the Imperial Valley, in California, under present conditions. He said no one denies that in one of its annual spring rampages the Colorado River will break through man's control and sweep this valley. The electric power trust, he said, is against building the dam unless the electricity that is generated as a by-product of the dam is turned over to private exploiters.

Flood control is the first purpose of the dam, the speaker said, but private greed would block the saving of life and property unless profit to them is assured.

Senator Norris ridiculed the claim that government control means politics in super power of the nation. "The electric trust is in politics up to its neck," said Senator Norris, in explaining the ramifications of this force that extends down to the smallest hamlet. Among those who spoke in praise of Senator Norris' efforts to conserve super power for the people were former Governor Pinchot of Pennsylvania, Senator Walsh of Montana, Frank Morrison, secretary of the A. F. of L., and Edward Keating, editor of Labor.

A. F. OF L. SUPPORTS ANTI-INJUNCTION FIGHT

Washington, April 23.—The American Federation of Labor has joined forces with the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employes of America in appealing from the action of Judge Delahanty in New York, who issued an injunction restraining representatives of the street railway employes' union from attempting to organize the employes of the Interborough Rapid Transit Company.

"The American Federation of Labor is deeply interested in the proceedings because organized labor does not believe that the injunction issued by Judge Delahanty is in conformity with law or justice," declared William Green, president of the A. F. of L.

"We believe that the men employed upon the Interborough Rapid Transit Company System should be permitted to unite with the forces of organized labor and to join a bona fide trade union if they wish. They should not be prohibited from doing so through the operation of a court injunction, nor should the representatives of organized labor be enjoined from soliciting these men to join a bona fide trade union.

"Because of the deep interest which the American Federation of Labor has in the legal questions involved, we will support the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employes and their attorneys in the efforts they are making to have the injunction issued by Judge Delahanty set aside."

JUSTICE BRANDEIS ARMS COURT OPPONENTS

Justice Brandeis of the United States Supreme Court has armed free men in their fight against the court's opinion in the stone cutters' case.

Justice Brandeis' dissenting view includes this scathing denunciation of a slave decision:

"If, on the undisputed facts of this case, refusal to work can be enjoined, Congress created by the Sherman law and the Clayton act an instrument for imposing restraints upon labor which reminds of involuntary servitude."

Here is a member of the highest court in our country objecting to a decision that means serfdom—a condition wherein free men must labor under conditions obnoxious to them, but which they must accept because interstate commerce may be affected.

The right of workers to withhold their labor power—the difference between free men and slaves—is wiped out.

Justice Brandeis has said the last word in his reproach to an institution that is supposed to guard the liberties of citizens, but which, according to one of its own members, would enslave workers.

The majority opinion again emphasized the solicitude this court shows for combinations of capital which are accused under the Sherman anti-trust law and the rigidity with which it applies this act, and ignores the Clayton amendments thereto, when labor is involved.

To permit combinations of capital to escape, the court invented the term "rule of reason." Or, in other words, the court says: "We must use reason in applying the law." In the steel trust case, handed down March 1, 1920, the court said that if this trust were dissolved "we see * * * a material disturbance of, and, it may be serious detriment to, the foreign trade." Rarely has this court so openly declared that law must be enforced with an eye to business.

In the stone cutters' case the court ignored the Clayton amendment to the anti-trust law which exempts trade unions. The court persists in classifying labor organizations with corporations, though one is composed of human beings while the other is a thing created by the state.

Under the stone cutters' decision workers can not refuse to work for any reason or no reason. There was no boycotting, no pleading with non-unionists to join with them or other action that courts refer to as "coercion" and "intimidation." The stone cutters simply refused to work on the non-union product, as Justice Brandeis clearly shows. He points out that the majority decision breaks new paths in judicial history and differs from every other so-called "labor case," such as Danbury Hatters, Bucks Stove and Duplex.

The majority opinion declares that the stone cutters must handle this stone and reverses two lower courts who refused to issue injunctions to that effect.

It is beside the question to say that the court can not jail the organized population of the country. This will not be attempted. The decision will be used only to the extent of breaking the workers' spirit through fear of involvement with courts. With the spirit of workers broken, it is hoped they will then serve as strikebreakers against their fellows.

Justice Brandeis warns workers what is in store for them. He says it will enslave them; that it will take from them the right to elect under what conditions they will labor.

Free institutions and a respect for our judiciary can not exist under such methods.

FARMERS' LOW INCOME MENACES PROSPERITY

New York, April 23.—The real purchasing power of the farmers must be increased if the present high level of manufacturing activity is to be sustained, declares Magnus W. Alexander, president of the National Industrial Conference Board, in an article in Industrial Management on vital problems confronting manufacturers.

Claiming that "real weekly wages, or the purchasing power of the weekly money wages, of industrial workers at the beginning of 1927 were 28 per cent above the pre-war level and have varied little during the past four years," Mr. Alexander questions whether the high level of urban wages alone is able to maintain industrial stability.

The purchasing power of the farm group normally consumes a tenth of the value of our manufactured products. A variation of 10 per cent in the volume of business, Mr. Alexander points out, spells the difference between prosperity and depression. The pronounced fall in farm prices has reduced the farm group's purchasing power to the point where prosperity is menaced. Consequently something must be done to increase the farmers' purchasing power.

To help the farmer along, Mr. Alexander says, the National Industrial Conference Board and the Chamber of Commerce of the United States have appointed a business men's commission on agriculture to propose a sound and constructive national agricultural policy."

It goes without saying that neither the National Industrial Conference Board nor the Chamber of Commerce of the United States have supported the constructive measure to increase the farmers' purchasing power approved by the organized farmers and organized labor and passed by the sixty-ninth Congress only to be vetoed by President Coolidge, who reflects the views of organized business as to what constitutes a "sound" policy for the farmers.

UNION'S LARGE GROWTH

New York, April 23.—New York Typographical Union No. 6 has a membership of 10,225. Its membership record since 1900, when its membership was 5,409, has been continuous. In 1859 the union had a membership of 28.

STEREOTYPERS GAIN

Harrisburg, Pa., April 23.—Stereotypers employed on newspapers in this city have secured a $5 weekly increase through arbitration. A two-year agreement has been signed.

TRADE UNIONS RAISE WAGE RATE SCALES

Washington, April 23.—Average hourly wage rates for 824,313 members of organized trades in 66 important industrial cities under agreements in force in 1926, increased 5.7 cents per hour compared with wage rates under 1925 agreements, according to figures made public by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics in its annual survey of union scale of wages and hours of labor.

The bureau's figures include organized labor in the building trades, chauffeurs and teamsters and drivers, granite and stone cutters, linemen, longshoremen, book and job printing and publishing, and newspaper printing and publishing.

The average rate per hour was $1.148 under 1926 agreements compared with $1.091 under 1925 agreements.

Granite and stone cutters head the list with an increase of 11.5 per cent, the building trades come second with an increase of 6.6 per cent, and the linemen third with an increase of 6.2 per cent.

The average hours in all trades covered by the report are 45.4 per week. By trade groups the average hours per week are: Bakers, 47.6; building trades, 43.8; chauffeurs and teamsters and drivers, 55.5; granite and stone cutters, 44; laundry workers, 47.4; linemen, 46; longshoremen, 45.3; book and job printing and publishing, 44.3; newspaper printing and publishing, 45.3.

JUSTICE WITH MINERS

New York, April 23.—"From the standpoint of social justice the mine workers are strongly entrenched," says the Coal Age in discussing the dispute between the United Mine Workers and the operators in the central competitive field. "Except for the $1.50 increase in day rates granted after a series of 'wildcat' strikes seven years ago, the much criticized Jacksonville scale is nothing more than a continuation of wages fixed by a government commission of arbitration in 1920."

PACKING PLANTS PROFIT

Washington, April 23.—In 1925 the nation's meat-packing plants increased their profits 18 per cent over 1923, according to a report by the Department of Commerce.

"Every item," the department said, "shows an increase in value as compared with 1923."

LAW PROTECTION FOR RIGHTS OF STRIKERS

Paris, France, April 23.—Victor Jean, a member of the French Chamber of Deputies, has introduced a bill to amend the labor code by the insertion of a provision that "a strike is a suspension and not a rupture of the contract of service."

Under the present law and practice, Mr. Jean explains, employers can cancel the contracts of service of employes who go on strike and refuse to re-engage them except at the loss of privileges accruing from seniority. Consequently workers who strike render themselves liable to an action for damages if they, individually, ceased to work and broke his contract with his employer.

In Mr. Jean's opinion the strike can not be legally regarded as a rupture of the collective agreement; it is merely a temporary suspension of the provisions of the agreement. To decide in principle that any strike, however legitimate its objects, can be made the ground for an action for damages on the part of the employer would be equivalent to paralyzing the right to strike.

OPPOSE CONVICT LABOR

Springfield, Ill., April 23.—Organized labor in this State is winning its fight against convict labor goods. A bill recently made a favorable report on the bill that calls for marking or branding all prison-made goods intended for sale within the State.

EMPLOYER UNION HITS CLERGY'S LABOR PLAN

New York, April 23.—The National Association of Manufacturers emphatically condemns the recent appeal of 41 Southern bishops and ministers to the owners of industries of the South to improve labor conditions by higher wages, shorter hours, labor representation and the absorption of the mill villages by the community.

The rejoinder to the clergymen was written by John E. Edgerton, president of the National Association of Manufacturers. Mr. Edgerton attacks the suggested shorter workday and higher wages as economically unsound and asserts the average preacher's utter ignorance of economic law. Preachers should limit themselves to the expounding of spiritual law and leave the operation of economic law to the anti-trade union National Association of Manufacturers and similar labor-hating employers' organizations.

Mr. Edgerton emphatically rejects the human element in labor and upholds the commodity theory of labor when he says: "Wages are not now, have been, and never will be determined by the necessities of men, nor by moral requirements." He dogmatizes. Wages and hours and all other conditions of labor always have been, are now, and always will be determined by economic conditions.

As to the preachers' appeal for "labor representation" in management, the mere suggestion makes Mr. Edgerton see the red flag of Bolshevism float. "Far from every factory in the United States and fluttering from the dome of the Capitol at Washington. It is a beautiful phrase," but "it should be clearly understood that anything resembling the sovietization of American industry is forever alien to the American theory of democracy." If labor wants representation in management, let labor go into the stock market and buy the right to vote at so much a voting share. But the principle of labor representation on any other than the stock market basis, that would be "sovietization."

Mr. Edgerton gingerly concedes the right of the workers to organize—but labor organizations "must not interfere with the rights of the employer or of others to impede their right to work."

Incidentally the National Association of Manufacturers, with its notorious anti-trade union policy, intimates that it regards itself as the living embodiment of the industrial relations principles of the Nazarene, who, Mr. Edgerton claims, never determined wages, but left the solution to the preachers. For the living application of the principles of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man in the field of wages people should go to the anti-trade union manufacturers' unions and their economists.

Mr. Edgerton is also president of the Tennessee Manufacturers' Association and of the Lebanon Woolen Mills, Lebanon, Tenn.

COMMUNISTS MUST BE BARRED FROM UNIONS

New York, April 23.—There is no common ground on which trade unionists and Communists can meet, William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor, declared in a letter to the Federation committee engaged in reorganizing the fur workers' union.

President Green's letter, written in reply to overtures from the deposed joint board of the fur workers, attacked Ben Gold, who was chairman of the joint board during its control of the local union. "Mr. Gold admits their affiliation with the Communist organization," President Green wrote. "They carry out the principles and policies of the Communist movement. There can be no harmony between Communistic organizations and the American Federation of Labor. It is the avowed purpose of the Communist leaders to capture and control the American Federation of Labor and substitute instead the Communist movement."

"STATE" IS LIABLE AS IS INDIVIDUAL

Quebec, April 23.—The "state" is as liable under the workmen's compensation act as is an individual, said Mr. Justice Tessier of the Supreme Court in ruling that a worker injured while working on a government dredge is entitled to compensation.

INJUNCTION JUDGE DEFEATED BY LABOR

Belleville, Ill., April 23.—Organized labor in seven counties comprising the third judicial district made the renomination of Injunction Judge Crow.

"Organized labor was not only successful in the fight," said Al Towers, vice president of the Illinois State Federation of Labor, "but the training trade unionists received will be an aid in eliminating enemies of labor from political life. This experience will be especially used against judges who persist in converting citizens without trial by jury."

UNIONISTS JAILED BY FEDERAL COURT

Washington, April 23.—The upholding of an injunction by the Federal Circuit Court of Appeals that prohibits trade union organizers from soliciting membership in a trade union again calls attention to the misuse of the equity process in labor disputes, said President Green.

The injunction was issued by Judge Baltzell of the Federal District Court of Indiana and restrained representatives of the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employes from inducing Indianapolis street car men from joining the union. Two representatives of the union, Robert Armstrong and John Parker,—were adjudged guilty of violating the order, and the court of appeals has upheld the lower court's sentence.

"It is difficult for workers to understand that any representative of organized labor would be committing a crime by merely asking men to join a trade union," said President Green. "No decision of record has ever been rendered which declares that it is a crime to request and persuade non-unionists to become identified with an American trade union."

VANZETTI JUDGES BOUND BY FORMS

New York, April 23.—In upholding the conviction of Sacco and Vanzetti, accused of murder in the Massachusetts State Supreme Court bound itself in technicalities and did not touch the point which in the public mind is all important, says the New York World, in a leading editorial.

The editor points out that the public is not demanding that the two men should be declared innocent or necessarily set free, but that "a new trial with every safeguard that can convince laboring men that it is a crime to request and persuade non-unionists to become identified with an American trade union."

Machine Menaces Miner's Freedom; Trade Union His Only Protection

Labor-saving machinery is jeopardizing the independence of the coal miner, according to an article by Carter Goodrich in Harper's Magazine.

"The machines are coming fast," declared a mine official in West Virginia to Mr. Goodrich. "It won't be long before our mines will be mechanized. And when we do, the man won't be a miner any more, coming to work when he pleases, he'll be a mechanic —or an unskilled laborer—"and he'll do what he's told."

Mr. Goodrich points out that machinery has invaded every branch of coal mining:

"The steam shovel has abandoned steam for compressed air or electricity,and gone underground to load coal in the high seams of the Western mines.

"An ingenious device that breaks the shovel's motion in half puts the same principle at work in a smaller loader fit for the ordinary seam. Other machines drag the coal across the floor with a snow-shovel scoop. Another teases it on to a moving belt by the circular motion of a set of blades like those of a child's sand machine, and the most common of all the machines lights it on with a pair of clawlike revolving arms.

"All of them slide the coal into the mine cars behind them with a speed no gang of miners could possibly equal.

"Nor is even this the extreme. One group of machines, the cutters-and-loaders—great battering rams armed with pick points and cutting chains—tear and smash their way without aid of powder into the solid seam itself. The latest of these giants has recently taken unto itself a sort of inverted pile-driver to attend it and to hold up the roof. Here, then, almost the whole job of coal-getting is concentrated in one compact mechanical process.

"These are the machines; what is their human significance? For the consumer—cheaper coal. For the operator who adopts them now—not too soon nor too late—big profits. For many others—bankruptcy. For the disordered industry—in the first instance a threatened aggravation of its worst malady of over-capacity; perhaps in the longer run, a hope of greater stability. What do they mean for the miners? For thousands, the loss of jobs; for some, skilled work driving the new monsters; for others, unskilled work tending them and feeding them with cars to load; but in any case, an end to the unique and traditional freedom of the mines."

The United Mine Workers, Mr. Goodrich believes, will be able to meet the revolution in the technic of industry to retain the present freedom of the miners or devise new forms of freedom.

LOCKED-OUT R. R. MEN ASK ROCKEFELLER AID

New York, April 23.—Fred Barr, vice president of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen, in charge of the locked-out engineers, hostlers and firemen of the Western Maryland Railroad, has written a letter to John D. Rockefeller requesting him to state his views on the strike.

Mr. Barr's letter recalls the sermon recently delivered by Mr. Rockefeller in which he said he was convinced that employers and employes are partners, not enemies; that their interests are common, not opposed; that in the long run the success of each is dependent upon success of the other.

In the opinion of Mr. Barr the case of the locked-out Western Maryland employes presents a glaring inconsistency with the views expressed by Mr. Rockefeller, the policies pursued by the management being directly opposed to them.

Mr. Barr declares that the locked-out employes made appeal after appeal to Mr. Rockefeller, but without avail. Then they requested the Federal Council of Churches, the National Catholic Welfare Conference, and the Association of American Rabbis to make an investigation, whose report substantiated every charge made against the Western Maryland management. When the report was about to be released, Mr. Rockefeller sold his Western Maryland stock.

While Mr. Rockefeller is no longer interested in the road, the letter states, he still controls a large portion of the traffic. Mr. Barr points out that due to this control of traffic "the Western Maryland officials will heed a sincere demand from you that the reasonable requests of the employes be granted and that peace be restored to the positions which belong to them by every right of equity and fair dealing."

GRAIN BOARD OUSTS BIG ARMOUR COMPANY

Chicago, April 23.—The Armour Grain Company has been ousted from the Board of Trade. An investigation revealed dishonest practices by those "in the employ or under the continuing influence of the company."

The charge is falsified when the company was to be taken over by a farmers' co-operative concern. The Western Maryland officials will heed a sincere demand from you that the reasonable requests of the employes be granted and that peace be restored to the positions which belong to them by every right of equity and fair dealing."

PRISON LABOR IS COSTLY

Oklahoma City, April 23.—The broom corn industry of this State is affected by the operation of prison labor at the largest broom factories in the world at the McAlester penitentiary.

These brooms are sold at cut-throat prices throughout the United States in competition with free labor employed by manufacturers who buy Oklahoma broom corn. To retaliate against this unfair competition free labor manufacturers are buying their broom corn elsewhere. As a result broom corn growers in this State lost $1,166,000 last year.

FEDERAL ESTATE TAX UPHELD BY OFFICIAL

Providence, R. I., April 23.—The Federal estate tax law is opposed by wealth, because "capital favors a tax that can be passed on," said Mark Graves, tax commissioner of the State of New York, in an address to the Economic League.

"Wealth knows that an inheritance tax can not be passed on," said Mr. Graves. "The repeal of the Federal estate law will benefit the heirs of three or four thousand wealthy people who die each year. To the extent that this limited class is benefited, the average taxpayer—the farmer, the home-owner, the business man and industry generally—will be harmed, because they will have to make up whatever sum is saved the beneficiaries of these wealthy people.

"I have followed with interest the energetic and apparently well financed movement to secure the repeal of the Federal estate tax law. Organizers of the movement realize that if the Federal estate tax can be removed the States will be competitively bidding with one another and will bring State inheritance taxation into disrepute.

"The inheritance tax is a fair tax. It occurs but once in a generation. It does not hurt. It does not affect anyone. Only those with ability to pay come within its provisions."

CANTON STRIKE RULES

Hankow, China, April 23.—Employers' rights in strikes are limited by the strike regulation act of the Republic of Canton.

Shopkeepers and owners of factories are permitted to carry on their business during strikes, but are not permitted to break strikes by temporarily engaging other workmen.

In settling a wages strike, the employers shall pay wages during the strike on the new scale agreed between the two parties.

In a strike, employers are not permitted to bribe a portion of the striking employes from out of loyalty and character in order to resist the strikers.

Unions and laborers, on the other hand, are prohibited from blockading shops or factories during the strike and from obstructing the operations which are conducted by the employers themselves. Laborers are also prohibited from confiscating goods or articles from shops or factories during a strike.

PICKETING IS A BASIC FUNCTION OF LABOR; EMPLOYERS AND GOVERNMENT OPPOSE IT

London, April 23.—Limiting the right of picketing is one of the major slogans of organized employers of Great Britain and the Baldwin government in their concerted campaign against trade unionism.

"To try to prevent trade unionists from communicating with or approaching non-unionists to persuade them not to blackleg is to load the dice against the workers in favor of the employers," declares Walter M. Citrine, General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress, in an article in the Labour Magazine. "Right from the earliest days the right to picket has been inseparable from the customs and practices of trade unionism."

Mr. Citrine traces the open and covert methods of the employers to hamstring the right to picket, both by organized intimidation and acts of parliament; from the repeal of the combination laws in 1824 to the conspiracy and protection of property act of 1875. The courts held that the act of 1875 permitted the communication of information but prohibited peaceful persuasion. The right to picket was finally placed beyond doubt by the trades dispute act of 1906, which expressly declares:

"It shall be lawful for one or more persons, acting on their behalf or on behalf of a trade union or an individual employer or firm in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute, to attend at or near a house or place where a person resides or works or carries on business or happens to be, if they so attend merely for the purpose of peacefully obtaining or communicating information, or of peacefully persuading any person to work or abstain from working."

"There can scarcely be any challenge of the plain meaning and intention of this section of the act of 1906," says Mr. Citrine. "Under it the picketing of a man's house or the place where he works is permitted to one or more persons if it is done in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute; and the reason for doing it is to communicate or obtain information, or to persuade peacefully and without intimidation. It does not sanction molestation, obstruction, or coercion of any man. Ample powers are possessed by the authorities under the common law to prevent or to punish those who under pretence of picketing should be guilty of these offences. Many cases have been dealt with on these lines, and there is absolutely no warrant in the custom or practice of picketing to justify the allegation that the law requires to be altered.

"The suggestion that the residences of men should not be picketed, would, in certain circumstances, be equivalent to a denial of the right of picketing. With motor traffic it is possible today to bring men from the scene of their work to their homes and picket them, picketing the slightest opportunity to approach them at the work gates.

"The alleged evils due to mass picketing have been greatly exaggerated. Who is to determine what constitutes a mass picket? The number of blackleg workers employed is of itself an important factor in arriving at what is a fair estimate of picketing strength. Two pickets may be sufficient to communicate with a peacefully persuade the same number of blacklegs, but they would be powerless against 200 blacklegs.

"If picketing is legitimate, then reasonable facilities for its conduct must be afforded. Once give the courts power to define what constitutes 'reasonable facilities' and picketing would become a thing of the past."